

Therefore, they gradually cultivate uninterrupted path that are increasingly strengthened by familiarity with the direct realization of emptiness and Bodhicitta.

Yet not all paths of meditation realize emptiness directly. Hence, like paths of seeing, paths of meditation can be categorized into two types:

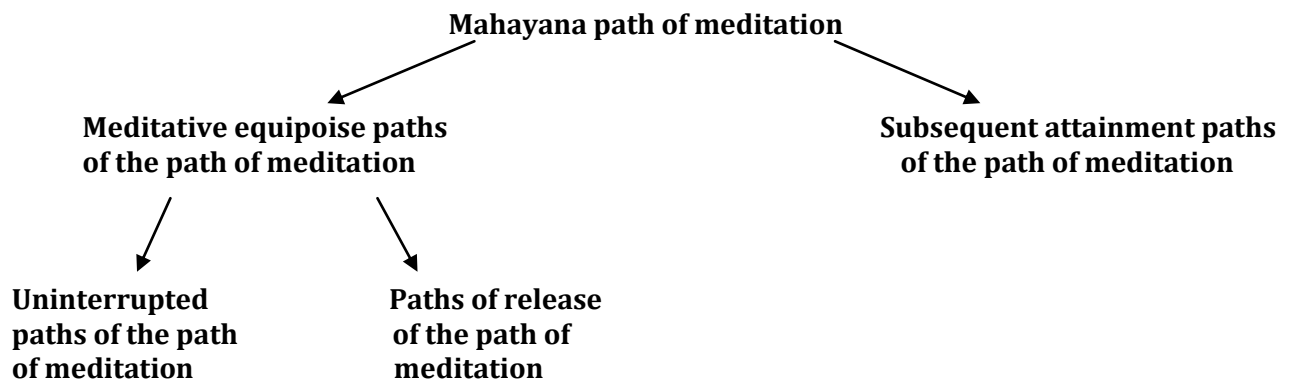
- i. Meditative equipoise paths of the path of meditation
- ii. Subsequent attainment paths of the path of meditation

i. Meditative equipoise paths of the path of meditation

Meditative equipoise paths can be further subdivided into:

- 1) Uninterrupted paths of the path of meditation
- 2) Paths of release of the path of meditation

Uninterrupted paths and paths of release are both meditative equipoise paths that directly realize emptiness.



1) Uninterrupted paths of the path of meditation

As explained during the presentation of the path of seeing, uninterrupted paths are meditative equipoise paths that directly realize emptiness and eliminate particular objects of elimination, i.e. any of the afflictive or cognitive obstructions. Uninterrupted paths of the path of *meditation*, in particular, are meditative equipoise paths that eliminate any of the different layers of *innate* afflictive or cognitive obstructions.

2) Paths of release of the path of meditation

Paths of release are meditative equipoise paths that directly realize emptiness. They arise right after the uninterrupted paths, when the obstructions (to be eliminated by the preceding uninterrupted path) *have been eliminated* and the elimination or cessation of those obstructions is attained. In the case of the path of meditation, paths of release arise when any of the innate afflictive or cognitive obstruction to be eliminated by the preceding uninterrupted path have indeed been eliminated, i.e. when their cessation is attained.

The first moment of the path of meditation constitutes an uninterrupted path that serves as the direct antidote to the coarsest ‘objects of elimination of the path of meditation’, i.e. the coarsest innate afflictive obstructions.

ii. Subsequent attainment paths of the path of meditation

Subsequent attainment paths are paths that do not realize emptiness directly. They arise after the uninterrupted paths and paths of release, when the practitioner arises from meditative equipoise in order to engage in the accumulation of merit, for example. Instances of these paths include Bodhicitta, compassion, generosity, the wisdom directly realizing subtle impermanence, the wisdom conceptually realizing emptiness, etc. in the continua of Bodhisattvas on the path of meditation.

Furthermore, as explained before, the Mahayana path of meditation can also be categorized into ten Bodhisattva bhumis/grounds. The first bhumi consists of two parts: (1) the first bhumi that pertains to the path of seeing and (2) the first bhumi that pertains to the path of meditation.

Hence Bodhisattvas who newly attain the path of meditation are still on the first bhumi.

During each bhumi of the path of meditation, particular innate afflictive or cognitive obstructions are eliminated. From the first bhumi that pertains to the path of meditation until the eighth bhumi, innate afflictive obstructions are removed, whereas from the eighth to the tenth bhumi, cognitive obstructions are removed.

Regarding the obstructions that are eliminated on the first eight bhumis, innate afflictive obstructions can be divided into nine types. The following description is according to Panchen Sonam Drakpa (author of many of the principal textbooks used at Drepung Loseling Monastic University, Ganden Shartse Monastic University, the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, and other institutions):

1. **Big-big** innate afflictive obstructions
2. **Medium-big** innate afflictive obstructions
3. **Small-big** innate afflictive obstructions
4. **Big-medium** innate afflictive obstructions
5. **Medium-medium** innate afflictive obstructions
6. **Small-medium** innate afflictive obstructions
7. **Big-small** innate afflictive obstructions
8. **Medium-small** innate afflictive obstructions
9. **Small-small** innate afflictive obstructions

Please note that **big-big** refers to the coarsest innate afflictive obstructions, whereas **small-small** to the subtlest innate afflictive obstructions.

Big-big afflictive obstructions are further divided into:

- 1.1. **Coarse big-big** innate afflictive obstructions
- 1.2. **Subtle big-big** innate afflictive obstructions

Hence, there are ten types of innate afflictive obstructions that are gradually eliminated by the uninterrupted paths of the first eight bhumis:

- (1) The uninterrupted path of the **first bhumi** that pertains to the path of meditation eliminates **coarse big-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (2) The uninterrupted path of the **second bhumi** eliminates **subtle big-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (3) The uninterrupted path of the **third bhumi** eliminates **medium-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (4) The uninterrupted path of the **fourth bhumi** eliminates **small-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (5) The uninterrupted path of the **fifth bhumi** eliminates **big-medium** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (6) The uninterrupted path of the **sixth bhumi** eliminates **medium-medium** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (7) The uninterrupted path of the **seventh bhumi** eliminates **small-medium** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (8) The **eighth bhumi** has two uninterrupted paths. The first of the two uninterrupted paths simultaneously eliminates **big-small**, **medium-small**, and **small-small** innate afflictive obstructions.

After the innate afflictive obstructions are removed on the eighth bhumi, Bodhisattvas start to eliminate cognitive obstructions.

Cognitive obstructions can be divided into three types:

1. **Big** cognitive obstructions
2. **Medium** cognitive obstructions
3. **Small** cognitive obstructions

Small cognitive obstructions are further divided into:

- 1.1. **Coarse small** cognitive obstructions
- 1.2. **Subtle small** cognitive obstructions